DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 201 136 EC 132 562

TITLE	Policy Issues for Assuring the Delivery of Continuing Education Programs for Handicapped Persons.
INSTITUTION	Council for Exceptional Children, Reston, Va. Policy Research Center.
SPONS AGENCY	Office of Special Education (ED), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Oct 80
GRANT	G007702411
NOTE	12p.; A part of the Policy Options Project.
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Accessibility (for Disabled); Adults; *Continuing Education; Cooperative Programs; Definitions; Delivery Systems; *Disabilities; *Educational Policy; Models

ABSTRACT

Policy issues concerned with the provision of continuing education programs to adult handicapped persons are examined. The current availability of only a few continuing education programs is noted, and a definition of continuing education is offered. Specific policy considerations are listed for the three areas of commonality in programing: accessibility, specially designed instruction, and cooperative community planning. Five guiding principles for policy development include: the factor that most differentiates continuing education from elementary and secondary education is the power of the individual to have decision making authority; it is important that handicapped individuals have available to them the wide range of programmatic options that are available to nonhandicapped individuals; and an administrative unit should be created at all levels to advocate and guide the development of a comprehensive program. A model of continuing education charting curricular areas against service progression is offered. (DB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED2011136

U S DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

POLICY ISSUES FOR ASSURING THE DELIVERY OF CONTINUING EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR HANDICAPPED PERSONS

Prepared by
The Policy Options Project Staff
for the
Policy Options Project

October 1980

The Council for Exceptional Children
1920 Association Drive
Reston, Virginia 22091

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
C.E.C
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

EC132562

Published in 1980 by The Council for Exceptional Children

The work performed herein was done pursuant to a grant from the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped (now the Office of Special Education within the Department of Education) (Grant Number: G007702411). The opinions expressed herein, however, do not necessarily reflect the position or policy of the U.S. Department of Education, and no official endorsement by the U.S. Department of Education should be inferred.

Introduction

Rapidly changing economic, political, and social conditions in contemporary society require youth and adults to acquire lifelong learning habits and to expand their interests and skills through a variety of traditional and nontraditional educational programs. Evidence of increased involvement of adults in both formal and informal continuing education programs is readily available. For example, Cross and Zusman (1979) reported that studies conducted in 1975 by the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare indicated that there were at least 17 million citizens beyond the usual age of public school attendance who were enrolled in some form of continuing education program. The diversity of these programs offers a wide range of options through which these adults may address particular academic, social and recreational needs, or acquire basic living skills.

To date, however, little consideration has been given or is occurring with regard to continuing education experiences for handicapped persons beyond the traditional public school experience. That such programs are needed has been well documented. In the White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals' Awareness Papers, for example, specific mention was made of the fact that,

> "Continuing education should be considered as one area of the need for comprehensive services for the handicapped individual. Comprehensive services will include total programs in the services of health, education, and welfare" (White House Awareness Papers, 1976).

Although some available continuing education programs are in operation, they are few in number, are in a variety of settings, possess multiple purposes, and frequently operate in the absence of any state or local policy. Since it is important that handicapped individuals have available to them as wide a range of programmatic options as are available to nonhandicapped individuals, there is a critical need at present to address policy issues related to adapting or adopting continuing education programs to meet the needs of handicapped persons. To assist decision makers in this area, it is the intent of the Policy Options Project to identify the

basic policy considerations in need of further research and development on federal, state, and local levels.

The Nature and Scope of Continuing Education

Because of the varied sponsorship and focus of these programs in terms of both agencies and financial resources, they are frequently described by a variety of terms, such as extension education, vocational education, community education, adult education, rehabilitation, continuing education, nontraditional postsecondary education and most recently by the term lifelong learning. For purpose of clarity and consistency, the term "continuing education" will be used throughout this paper. This term describes a broad array of programs that exist beyond the postsecondary world. A specifically applicable definition is that used by the Gallaudet College Center for Continuing Education:

> "Continuing education is any learning activity which helps people to get more out of life, to enjoy better health, to better manage their homes, money, and property, to improve their occupational, social, and cultural skills, to better understand themselves, their families, co-workers, friends, and the world they live in." (Gallaudet College Center for Continuing Education, Washington, D.C., 1975)

Continuing education programs are typically provided by a variety of agencies including, among others, colleges and universities, local education agencies, public libraries, advocacy organizations, special interests groups, and private agencies. Regardless of the diversity of goals and objectives that prompt such public and private efforts, and despite a variety of formats for service delivery, there are certain basic elements of commonality in programming that policy makers should consider in attempting to provide appropriate continuing education programs and experiences for handicapped adults. These include program accessibility, specially designed instruction, and cooperative community planning. All three of these common elements serve as a conceptual framework for policy development in this area:

I. ACCESSIBILITY

Policy Development Considerations:

- Do handicapped persons have the right and opportunity to participate in existing programs?
- What programmatic options are available for handicapped adults?
- Are barriers removed that would prevent handicapped persons from participating in existing programs?
- Are supplementary aids and services available to enable handicapped persons to benefit from existing continuing education programs?

II. SPECIALLY DESIGNED INSTRUCTION

Policy Development Considerations:

- What options are available for assessing an adult participant's needs and interests?
- When an individual cannot benefit from regular instruction, to what degree should the instruction be available in a specially designed fashion?
- What policy options are available to assure needed curricular, methodological, behavioral and/or environmental adaptations when specially designed instruction is necessary?
- An analysis of specific needs must be related to program costs, personnel needed, location of instructional sites, resources to be acquired (supplies, equipment, etc.) and time lines for conducting the program.

III. COOPERATIVE COMMUNITY PLANNING

Policy Development Considerations:

- To what degree are the needs of handicapped persons considered when planning continuing education programs?
- What policy options are available for assessing needs and fostering the input of handicapped adults in any program planning efforts?
- What community resources are available to meet the needs of adult handicapped persons?
- What options are available for cooperative efforts in community planning for service delivery?

Guiding Principles for Policy Development

A flexible model for insuring the delivery of continuing education programs for handicapped students should be based on the following *a priori* principles:

1. The factor that most differentiates continuing education from elementary and secondary education is the power of the individual to have decision-making authority in terms of the degree to which (s)he wants to participate, the conditions for his/her participation, and the courses and activities in which (s)he wishes to participate. It is important in extending continuing education to handicapped individuals that they be respected as adults and their rights to make decisions about their education be respected. This may necessitate making available specialized counselling and the adaptation of traditional communication and administration mechanisms to assure that handicapped individuals understand the choices they have to make and the procedures for exercising those choices.

2. It is important that handicapped individuals have available to them the wide range of programmatic options that are available to nonhandicapped individuals. This would mean the opportunity for continuing education experiences in basic social and academic skills, career and vocational areas, and courses in activities designed to expand the quality of one's thinking and one's life. In order to assure that such a range of options exist, continuing education programs will need to assure that there are no barriers to enabling handicapped individuals to participate in the wide range of programs offered to the community. Because some handicapped individuals have unique learning needs, it may be necessary to provide some special courses for such individuals, but such courses should be open to participation to nonhandicapped members of the community.

3. Part of the dynamic of equality as an adult includes the assumption of equal responsibility regarding participation in community activities. Thus, handicapped individuals should be provided continuing education on the same economic and administrative terms as are applied to nonhandicapped individuals. Adjustments in these terms particularly those of economic participation in the program should not be made on the basis of handicap and condition, but rather on the individual's ability to pay, a factor generally considered in most continuing education programs.

4. Handicapped individuals should have extended to them all of the additional benefits that are provided to nonhandicapped individuals when they participate in continuing education. For example, continuing education students at community colleges often have access to the library and recreational and social activities in the college. Handicapped individuals should have similar access to these activities. Consequently, if necessary, facility and program adaptation should be made to achieve this result.

5. Continuing education programs should seek on an affirmative action basis the employment of handicapped individuals to teach in the system. This should not be limited to only those courses with heavy concentrations of handicapped students, although a particular effort should be made in employing handicapped individuals in such courses. An inclusion of handicapped individuals on the faculty will provide role models for handicapped individuals as well as reducing negative stereotypes held by nonhandicapped individuals.

6. Since continuing education programs have not traditionally provided for comprehensive access of handicapped individuals to generic programming, it is important that an administrative unit be created at all levels of the government and administration of continuing education to advocate and guide the development of a comprehensive program. Further, such a unit should serve as a link to handicapped individuals and organizations concerned about handicapped individuals to help assess their continuing education needs and facilitate their participation. Also, such a unit would be able to help the continuing education administration and faculty better understand handicapped individuals and make necessary programmatic and environmental adaptations.

Programming Model for the Delivery of Continuing Education to Handicapped Persons

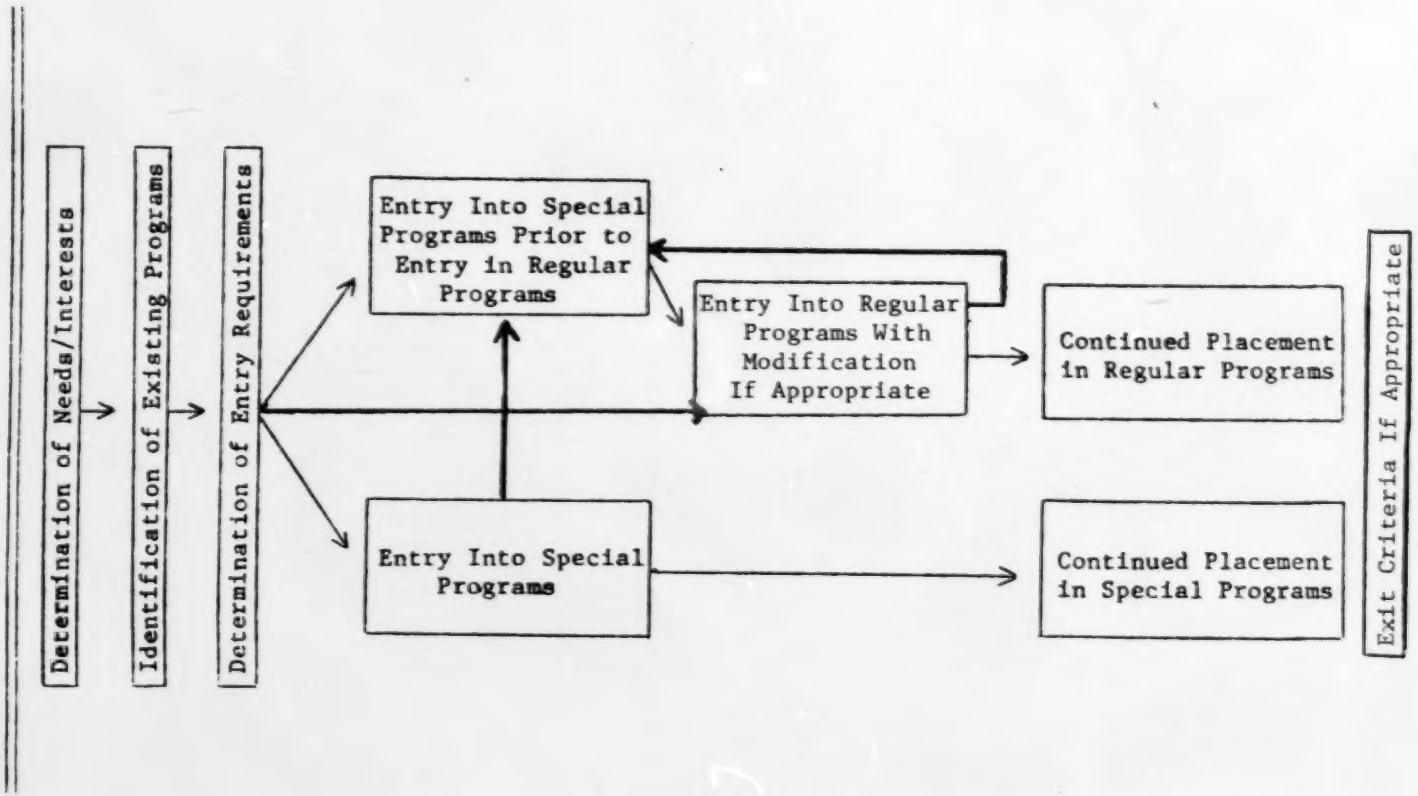
The following is a graphic display of these principles in a viable model for assuring the delivery of continuing education programs to handicapped persons:

Continuing Education
Structural Concept

Curricular Areas

Basic Living Skills
(Ability to take
care of oneself)
Independent Living Skills
Academic Skills
Career/Vocational
Expanded Life Development

Service Progression


Determination of Needs/Interests
Identification of Existing Programs
Determination of Entry Requirements
Entry Into Special Programs Prior to Entry in Regular Programs
Entry Into Regular Programs With Modification If Appropriate
Continued Placement in Regular Programs
Entry Into Special Programs
Continued Placement in Special Programs
Exit Criteria If Appropriate

9

10

Conclusion

The challenge facing policy makers in the future is to provide educational services to individuals according to their needs and regardless of age. Policies should be developed so that no person's educational and training needs would ever be terminated. Such assurance of service delivery through continuing education programs for handicapped persons results in the optimal development of an independent and productive person.

References

Cross, Patricia K., and Zusman, Ami. "The Needs of Nontraditional Learners and the Response of Nontraditional Programs," in An Evaluative Look at Nontraditional Postsecondary Education, NIE, Washington, D.C., September 1979.

Gallaudet College Center for Continuing Education, Concept Paper, Washington, D.C.: Gallaudet College, 1975.

White House Conference on Handicapped Individuals, Awareness Papers, Washington, D.C., 1976.